



## Governments delay access to public records during pandemic

By DAVID A. LIEB

As states prepared to reopen their economies following coronavirus shutdowns last spring, The Associated Press asked governors across the U.S. for records that could shed light on how businesses and health officials influenced their decisions.

Nine months later, after several more COVID-19 surges and shutdowns, the AP still has not received records from about 20 states. Some outright denied the requests or sought payments the AP declined to make. Others have not responded, or said they still need more time.

Public records have become harder to get since the world was upended by the pandemic a year ago. Governors, legislatures and

local officials have suspended or ignored laws setting deadlines to respond to records requests. They cited obstacles for staffers who are working at home or are overwhelmed with crisis management.

The result is that information that once took a few days or weeks to obtain now often takes months — depriving the public of timely facts about decisions their leaders are making.

"The pandemic rages on, but investigative journalism doesn't halt. The public's right to know doesn't cease to exist," said Gunita Singh, a legal fellow at the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, which has tracked nationwide delays in responding to public records requests.

Continued on next page



In this June 30, 2020, photo, a man passes a clothing shop with open signs in the window in Calexico, Calif.

Associated Press



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In this Oct. 15, 2020, file photo, Hawaii Gov. David Ige speaks at a news conference at the Daniel K. Inouye International Airport in Honolulu.

**Associated Press**

**Continued from Front**

"Having these unnecessary measures in place that hinder open government sets a terrible precedent," Singh said.

U.S. states and local governments are far from

alone in their deferrals and delays. Dozens of countries suspended or altered their right-to-information policies last year while citing the pandemic, according to a joint tracking effort by the Centre for Law and De-

mocracy and Access Info Europe.

Open-government advocates have started to worry about potential long-lasting effects.

The pandemic could "give cover for emergency measures to come into force that could then over time become permanent," said Joe Powell, deputy CEO of the Open Government Partnership, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that works with governments in 78 countries, including the U.S., to promote transparency and public participation.

Even before the pandemic, some government agencies routinely blew past their own deadlines for responding to public records requests. But the number of such cases has grown over the past year, according to AP interviews with government watchdog groups.

New data indicates there has been both a higher demand for government information during the pandemic and longer waits to obtain it.

State, county and city governments experienced a sixfold increase in their time spent on public records requests last year, rising from an average of 346 hours in the first quarter to 2,121 hours by the last quarter, according to an analysis by GovQA, a company that provides cloud-based software to manage public records requests.

That surge was driven by both the volume and complexity of requests. After shutdowns led to a dip in records requests accepted by government agencies from April to June, the number of such requests shot up by 23% over the rest of the year, according to the GovQA data.

Processing delays were exacerbated by remote work, outdated public-records laws, underfunded budgets and increased oversight from top administrators wanting to review potentially sensitive data before it was released, said GovQA spokesperson Jen Snyder.

The AP last May sought copies of communications about the coronavirus between governors' offices, state health directors and groups representing businesses, health care providers and local governments. By August, the AP had received records from about one-third of the states, revealing that some governors had allowed businesses to help write the reopening rules affecting their own industries.

The AP still has requests pending in Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, New York and Texas. Illinois this past week finally provided 74 pages of documents, heavily redacted.

After months of repeated AP inquiries, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's office on March 3 released just two documents from last spring — one from a hospital association proposing criteria for resuming elective procedures, the other from a mayor's group about guidelines for opening swimming pools and camps. A spokesperson for the Republican governor apologized for the delay, citing "human error" for a breakdown of staff communication.

Delaware Gov. John Carney was one of several chief executives who initially suspended the state's response deadline for public records requests during the coronavirus emergency. With no end to the pandemic in sight, the Democratic governor reversed course and lifted the suspension in September.

But Carney's administration did not fulfill the AP's request until Feb. 10, when it provided 109 pages of documents and a note that more could come later. Though most were merely press clippings, the records included emails from representatives of car dealers, home builders and other industries seeking to keep operating during a shutdown.

More than a half-dozen states — Connecticut, Hawaii, Indiana, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Washington — continue to suspend some open-records requirements through gubernatorial orders, according to an AP review of public-records policies.

Hawaii Gov. David Ige, a Democrat, took the most sweeping action when he suspended the state's entire open-records law in March 2020. Ige eased the suspension under pressure from open-government advocates. □



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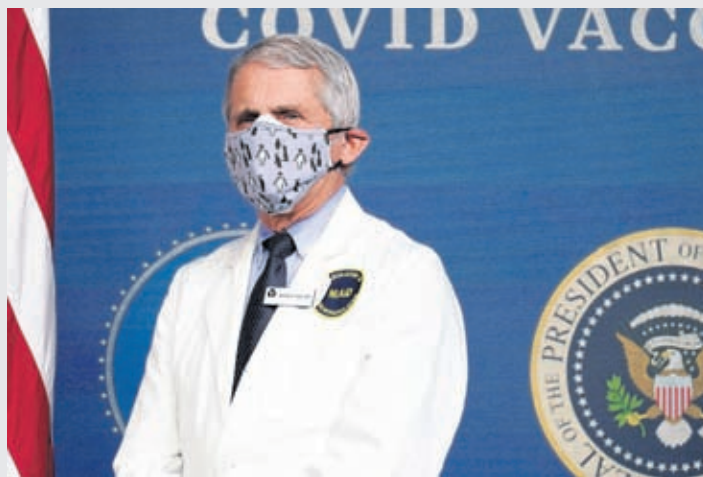
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In this Feb. 25, 2021, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, listens as President Joe Biden speaks during an event to commemorate the 50 millionth COVID-19 shot in Washington.

Associated Press

## Fauci: Trump should urge his followers to get vaccinated

By MICHELLE LIU  
Associated Press

Dr. Anthony Fauci said Sunday he wishes former President Donald Trump would use his popularity among Republicans to persuade more of his followers to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

In a round of interviews on the morning news shows, the government's top infectious disease expert lamented polling showing that Trump supporters are more likely to refuse to get vaccinated, saying politics needs to be separated from "commonsense, no-brainer" public health measures. Fauci said it would be a "game changer" for the country's vaccine efforts if the former president used his "incredible influence" among Republicans.

"If he came out and said, 'Go and get vaccinated. It's really important for your health, the health of your family and the health of the country,' it seems absolutely inevitable that the vast majority of people who are his close followers would listen to him," Fauci told "Fox News Sunday."

There was no immediate comment from the former president's office Sunday. Trump has urged people to get vaccinated, doing so again two weeks ago at a conservative political gathering in Florida.

But he hasn't been among former presidents and other public officials who have been vaccinated on camera to encourage others to get the shot.

It was revealed only recently that he was vaccinated in private at the White House before leaving office in January.

Trump did not appear in a new public service campaign for the COVID-19 vaccine that included former Presidents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

Polls have shown Republicans joining Black people and other groups in expressing greater skepticism than others about the safety of the vaccine. Fauci said he doesn't understand the resistance.

"What is the problem here? This is a vaccine that is going to be lifesaving for millions of people," he said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

He added: "I mean, I just can't comprehend what the reason for that is when you have a vaccine that's 94-95% effective and it is very safe. I just don't get it."

The number of vaccine doses distributed and administered each day in the U.S. is rising, with more than 2.5 million daily shots in arms on average in the last week. □



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of Calif., walks from the House floor, during the vote on the Democrat's \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill, on Capitol Hill, Wednesday, March 10, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

## Pelosi pledges swift work on major infrastructure package

By HOPE YEN  
WASHINGTON (AP)

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Sunday pledged swift work by Congress on a job and infrastructure package that will be "fiscally sound," but said she isn't sure whether the next major item on President Joe Biden's agenda will attract Republican backing. Fresh off a major legislative victory on the \$1.9 trillion virus relief package that passed on near-party lines, Democrats face long and tough battles ahead in winning GOP endorsement of the administration's plans. Road- and bridge-building legislation has a long history of support from both parties as lawmakers aim to deliver on projects back home. But Republicans disagree with Biden's focus on the environment and the possibility of financing any program with debt after the government borrowed heavily to address the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

"Building roads and bridges and water supply systems and the rest has always been bipartisan, always been bipartisan, except when they oppose it with a Democratic president, as they did under President Obama, and we had to shrink the package," said Pelosi, D-Calif.

"But, nonetheless, hopefully, we will have bipartisanship," she said.

Pelosi has directed key Democratic lawmakers to begin working with Republicans on a "big, bold and transformational infrastructure package."

During the presidential campaign, Biden laid the groundwork by proposing \$2 trillion in "accelerated" investments to shift to cleaner energy, build half a million charging stations for electric vehicles, support public transit and repair roads and bridges. The plan emphasizes the importance of creating unionized jobs and addressing climate change.

The White House originally planned to come out with a plan in February, but more recently hasn't committed to a timeline. A roll-out is likely to slide into April as the administration embarks on a nationwide push over the coming weeks to sell Americans on the benefits of the COVID-19 relief bill.

Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, and Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., chairman of House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, hope to pass a bill out of their committees in May. The package could in-

clude policy changes — on green energy and immigration — and even try to make permanent some of the just-passed COVID-19 assistance such as child tax credits.

"It is going to be green and it is going to be big," DeFazio told The Associated Press.

Democrats used a fast-track budget process known as reconciliation to approve Biden's COVID-19 relief plan without Republican support, a strategy that succeeded despite the reservations of some moderates.

But work on passing infrastructure legislation in a Senate split 50-50 with Vice President Kamala Harris providing a tiebreaking vote will probably prove more difficult. Moderate Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W. Va., recently made clear he will block infrastructure legislation if Republicans aren't included.

Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso, the No. 3 Senate Republican, said he wants to see bipartisan support for an infrastructure legislation. But he said the House in the last Congress refused to embrace a \$287 billion bill unanimously passed by a Senate committee and changed it in a way that Republicans could not accept. □



# Winter storm closes roads in Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska

**The Associated Press**

A powerful late winter snowstorm intensified over the central Rocky Mountains on Sunday with heavy snow and wind leading to airport and road closures, power outages and avalanche warnings in parts of Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska.

The National Weather Service in Wyoming called it a "historic and crippling" winter storm that would cause extremely dangerous to impossible travel conditions through at least early Monday.

Major roads southeast of a line that crosses diagonally from the southwest corner of Wyoming to its northeast corner were closed Sunday, including roads in and out of Cheyenne and Casper.

The Wyoming Department of Transportation suspended plowing operations in the Casper area Sunday due to heavy snow and a lack of visibility, the agency said. "We had several plows drive off the roadway due to limited to zero



**Drew Carey clears snow from the walkway of his home as a snowstorm rips across the intermountain West Sunday, March 14, 2021, in Denver.**

**Associated Press**

visibility," the agency said on its Facebook page.

Farther south, a record of over 2 feet (61 centimeters) of snow had fallen just outside Cheyenne by noon Sunday, the weather service reported. A SNOTEL site at Windy Peak in the Laramie Range reported 52 inches (1.3 meters) of snow in a 24-hour period ending Sunday morning, the

weather service said.

A person who answered the phone at the Love's Travel Stop in Cheyenne, but declined to give his name, said 98 trucks were stranded there. They were taking fuel out a can at a time to fill up generators on the trucks to keep their refrigerators or freezers running, he said.

Interstate 80 was closed

across southern Wyoming and into the Nebraska panhandle, where 19 inches (48 centimeters) of snow were reported just south of Gering, Nebraska. Interstate 25 was closed north from Fort Collins, Colorado, to its end at Buffalo, Wyoming.

Denver Public Schools are taking a snow day on Monday, as will schools in Cheyenne and Casper in Wy-

oming. Some government offices in those areas also will be closed Monday.

At Denver International Airport, the runways were closed just before noon Sunday due to blowing snow and poor visibilities. "Many flights have already been canceled so the runway closures have minimal impacts," airport officials said in social media posts. More than 19 inches (48 centimeters) of snow had fallen at the airport by 11 a.m. Sunday, the weather service said.

The Northern Colorado Regional Airport that serves the Fort Collins and Loveland areas was closed Sunday morning after receiving a foot (30 centimeters) of snow, according to the airport's social media accounts. An avalanche warning was in effect Sunday for the Rocky Mountains west of Fort Collins, Boulder, Denver and Colorado Springs where "intense snowfall will cause large and destructive avalanches," Colorado Avalanche Center said. □

# Reports: Cuomo vaccine czar's loyalty calls raise concerns



**In this March 3, 2010 file photo, Larry Schwartz listens to a news conference at the Capitol in Albany, N.Y.**

**Associated Press**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — A longtime adviser to New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo leading the state's COVID-19 vaccine rollout has been calling county executives to gauge their loyalty to the Democratic governor amid a sexual harassment investigation, according to reports in The Washington Post and The New York Times.

One Democratic county executive, who was not named by the newspapers, was so disturbed by the call from vaccine "czar" Larry Schwartz that the executive filed notice of an impending ethics complaint with the public integrity unit of the state attorney general's office on Friday, the newspapers reported. The executive feared the

county's vaccine supply could suffer if the executive did not indicate support for Cuomo, the Post reported. Schwartz served as secretary to the governor from 2011 until 2015 and has advised Cuomo off and on since then. He returned last spring to assist the administration with the response to the coronavirus pandemic. Schwartz, who is working in a volunteer capacity to run New York's vaccine distribution, acknowledged making the calls to county executives, but told the Post he did not discuss vaccines in the conversations. "I did nothing wrong," Schwartz told the newspaper. "I have always conducted myself in a manner commensurate to a high ethical standard."

But the phone calls could raise questions about an intermingling of politics with the state's coronavirus response.

"People do not see calls

coming from the governor's mansion as somebody wearing one hat and then putting on another hat," Arthur Caplan, director of medical ethics at the NYU Grossman School of Medicine, told the Post. "If you are in control of a vital supply of a lifesaving resource like vaccines, you are carrying an enormous amount of implicit clout when you ask for political allegiance." Cuomo is facing allegations that he sexually harassed or behaved inappropriately toward six women, including several former staffers. He has denied touching any women inappropriately.

The three-term governor has rejected calls for his resignation from fellow Democrats, including New York's two U.S. senators, Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, and has asked New Yorkers to await the results of an investigation headed by state Attorney General

Letitia James.

Schwartz told the Post that the calls he made to assess political support for Cuomo were distinct from the role he plays in the vaccination effort.

"I did have conversations with a number of County Executives from across the State to ascertain if they were maintaining their public position that there is an ongoing investigation by the State Attorney General and that we should wait for the findings of that investigation before drawing any conclusions," he wrote in an email.

Beth Garvey, acting counsel to the governor, said in a statement emailed to The Associated Press through a Cuomo spokesperson on Sunday that any assertion Schwartz "acted in any way unethically or in any way other than in the best interest of the New Yorkers that he selflessly served is patently false." □



# Dutch police break up anti-govt protest on eve of election

**THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP)** — Dutch police used a water cannon and officers on horseback galloped across a park in The Hague on Sunday to break up a protest against the government and its tough coronavirus lockdown on the eve of three days of voting in the general election.

Hague police tweeted that they deployed riot officers to break up the protest after hundreds of people defied repeated calls to go home. Earlier, they arrested one man for attacking an officer with a stick.

An unknown number of protesters were arrested as police broke up the demonstration. An AP photographer saw a police dog bite one man as he was arrested by baton-wielding officers.

Before the police ended the protest, several people carried a homemade banner emblazoned with the text in Dutch "Love & Freedom: No Dictatorship." Many others held yellow umbrellas, which people taking part in anti-lockdown protests in recent weeks have often carried. Another demonstrator cart-



Dutch riot police arrest a man during a demonstration to protest government policies including the curfew, lockdown and coronavirus related restrictions in The Hague, Netherlands, Sunday, March 14, 2021.

Associated Press

ed a makeshift set of stocks with a photo of Prime Minister Mark Rutte's head stuck in the middle and a sign saying: "If you love the Netherlands, vote them out."

Police tweeted before the scheduled start of the event that the maximum number of participants already had been reached. Hundreds

more people arrived after the tweet, prompting authorities to halt trains heading to The Hague to prevent more people making their way to the city.

In recent weeks, smaller demonstrations have happened in Amsterdam, with riot police repeatedly called in to shepherd away protesters who refuse to

leave.

They reflect a growing impatience among a small section of society at the lockdown that has seen businesses including bars, restaurants and museums shut down since mid-October. Despite the lockdown, numbers of infections remain stubbornly high. More than 16,000 people are

confirmed to have died of COVID-19 in the Netherlands.

Meanwhile, party leaders took to the airwaves to seek the support of undecided voters, but also to start jockeying for position before the formation of the country's next governing coalition.

In a television talk show airing Sunday evening on national broadcaster NPO1, Christian Democrat leader Wopke Hoekstra said he would prefer to continue ruling in the outgoing four-party coalition led by Rutte. Rutte, in turn, said the Christian Democrats are the most natural partner for his conservative People's Party for Freedom of Democracy.

"This is a real bromance," said Jesse Klaver, leader of the Green Left party.

The comments foreshadow what could be a lengthy process of forming the next coalition after three days of coronavirus-affected voting wrap up Wednesday night.

A record 37 parties are taking part in the election for the 150 seats in Parliament's lower house. □

# Mexico's last island penal colony may now host cruise ships

**MEXICO CITY (AP)** — Mexican officials said ferries and cruise ships may soon be visiting the former Isla Marias prison, after the last island penal colony in the Americas was closed and turned into an environmental education center in 2019.

The education camp hasn't gone very well — only 40 youths have been trained on the island — and the administration of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador is now trying a different tack, because the island hasn't been offsetting the costs associated with keeping it open.

Officials said Saturday they are planning to build a dock for larger ships on the Isla Madre main island, the only one of the four Marias islands that is inhabited. Visitors will be able to tour the remote island jail, but

not stay overnight. Tourism Secretary Miguel Torruco described future tours.

"The experience begins with the cruise ship or ferry arriving from Mazatlán or San Blas, to Isla Madre, and on the voyage the passengers can admire the beauty of the ocean," Torruco said. It would be quite a long ride; the four islands are located 70 miles (110 kilometers) off the Pacific coast of Nayarit state.

"Visitors will have their first contact with the former island prison which for 100 years sheltered numerous criminals," Torruco said. Officials compared it to the now-closed U.S. prison at Alcatraz, and said tourist visits could start within three months.

The penal colony, founded in 1905, passed through some periods of infamous brutality, and as recently as

2013, the Islas Marias held 8,000 inmates.

The hemisphere was once dotted with remote island jails like the one depicted in the movie "Papillon," but they all gradually closed. When Panama closed its Isla Coiba penal colony in 2004, Isla Marias became the last one remaining in the Americas.

But far from the bloody reputation of places like Devil's Island — the French Guiana penal colony shuttered in 1946 — toward the end, the Islas Marias harbored many lower-risk or well-behaved inmates and the colony was viewed as a step toward release or rehabilitation.

While the prison kept mass tourism at bay, the islands suffered severe environmental degradation from over a century of use as a penal colony.



In this March 17, 2019 file photo, a mural of Nelson Mandela, who spent many of his imprisoned years in an island prison in South Africa, adorns a gate in front of the dock where prison staff and inmates arrive in Navy boats to the now closed Islas Maria penal colony located off Mexico's Pacific coast.

Associated Press

Island penal colonies were used around the world starting in the 1700s as remote, escape-proof places to "rehabilitate" inmates through hard labor. Often known as "prisons without bars," with the ocean serving as the most effective barrier to es-

cape, the penal colonies were also known for being at least in part self-supporting and a way to settle remote islands.

But in the end, the Islas Marias wound up costing Mexico far more per prisoner than did mainland jails. □



# Watching the watchers: Who's at helm of E.U.'s border agency?

By **LORNE COOK**  
**Associated Press**

**BRUSSELS (AP)** — The European Union's border and coast guard agency Frontex, the pride of the 27-nation bloc's vast effort to keep watch over its frontiers and anyone who might try to enter without authorization, is itself under surveillance — and under fire.

Almost literally sometimes: In the Aegean Sea, Turkish fighter jets and ships have buzzed Frontex aircraft or intimidated the agency's boats monitoring migrant movements in the narrow strip of sea between Turkey and Greece's eastern islands. Turkish troops allegedly fired warning shots in the air at the land border too.

And in the European Parliament, calls have come for Executive Director Fabrice Leggeri to resign. Some lawmakers say he's mishandled allegations that the agency was involved in fundamental violations of migrants' rights.

Charity groups and media outlets accuse Frontex of denying people their right to apply for asylum — which is illegal under EU law and refugee treaties. They say it was also complicit in, or failed to prevent, alleged pushbacks at sea by Greece's coastguard, where migrants were returned to Turkish waters.

Although the agency was supposed to have hired 40 fundamental rights officers by December, it still hasn't. An inquiry found no link between Frontex and Aegean pushbacks. But the Parliament has set up a "scrutiny group," to delve into the reports and human rights concerns. The EU's anti-fraud office is also looking at them, and at claims of misconduct by senior managers.



**In this Sunday, March 20, 2016, file photo, the sun rises as migrants and refugees on a dingy arrive at the shore of the northeastern Greek island of Lesbos, after crossing the Aegean sea from Turkey. Associated Press**

Even as criticism mounts, Frontex's powers are growing. In coming years, the agency is projected to swell to a 10,000-strong standing force, with armed officers and hi-tech surveillance equipment. Its budget has ballooned to 5.6 billion euros (\$6.7 billion) over the next seven years.

In 2014, the year before the EU's migrant challenge hit its peak, the agency had an annual budget of around 100 million euros and had to request border staff from member countries.

Its role is expanding too. Recently, when the United Kingdom left the EU, it insisted that Frontex handle border controls at the airport in the British territory of Gibraltar rather than Spanish officers.

But as Frontex's powers and duties grow, so does the need for oversight.

"It is, in my view, the most important agency in the whole European Union. And with power and funding comes responsibility, and of course safeguards and scrutiny," EU Migration Commissioner Ylva Johansson told investigating EU lawmakers on March 4.

Moreover, any failures at Frontex are an added embarrassment for nations that for years have been deeply divided over who should take responsibility for people entering without authorization and whether other member states should be obliged to help out.

"In the absence of the EU agreeing on migration management, what happens on the ground

firmly shapes how the EU is viewed from the outside," Hanne Beirens, at the Migration Policy Institute, told The Associated Press.

The question is: who exactly is at the helm when it comes to Frontex?

The agency is supervised by a management board of national interior ministry, police and border officials which establishes its work plan and operations. The Commission, which supervises the respect of EU laws, has two of the 28 board seats.

Leggeri, a French civil servant named Executive Director in 2015 just as hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees were arriving in Europe, is tasked with carrying out the board's strategy. The posts of deputy director and a number of other senior positions are unfilled.

On paper, Frontex is legally accountable to the 27 member countries and the European Parliament. The Commission, through Johansson, has political but not legal responsibility for Frontex's actions.

Out on the sea, or at land borders, though, Frontex operations are controlled by the country whose territory they take place on. In the Aegean, where many pushbacks have been reported, that means the Greek coastguard. This is where the lines of responsibility get muddy.

Frontex and Greece vehemently deny carrying out pushbacks, and the inquiry cleared the agency, although it did expose "monitoring and reporting" failures. But Leggeri requested twice last year that Athens probe the conduct of the Greek coastguard.

He also told the EU lawmakers that when Turkey waved thousands of migrants through to its borders with Greece last March, Athens decided in an emergency measure "to make optimal use of the provisions on interception" to stop the attempted influx.

That means, Leggeri said, "that in some cases the migrants' boats can be instructed not to stay in the territorial waters or not to enter." To some, that might appear to be the very definition of a pushback, and it begs the question: should Frontex comply when an order to intercept a migrant boat might actually be breaking the law?

These blurred legal definitions, unclear lines of command and the conflicting interests of coastal or inland EU member countries make the Frontex ship a complex one to command.

German conservative lawmaker Lena Duepont — a European Parliament "scrutiny group" member — told the AP that there's plenty of room to improve "the management ecosystem of the agency," especially the way Frontex is growing.

"It's the first time that we have someone wearing a gun, someone wearing a European uniform," as part of a standing corps rather than officers sent on request from member countries, she said. Frontex is more "European than ever before, and this is a drastic change within the agency." □



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tigen Test are only \$50, and the PCR Test is available as well, for a higher charge of \$125. At this moment, only MedCare offers the easier and substantially cheaper Antigen Test that is acceptable for travel to the U.S. as per the CDC guidelines. Pre-travel testing is not covered by the Aruban visitor insurance. Please contact your insurance company to verify if testing costs are in-

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## Ike's Bistro unveils vegan smorgasbord



**EAGLE BEACH — Ike's bistro at Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa**

surprises with an excellent, tasteful and varied vegan menu. Executive Chef Sandro Herold is obviously enthusiastic about the new offerings that fill up the place already. "People nowadays are a bit more conscious about what they eat. This menu offers a wide variety with creative vegan food items." We asked some of the guests about their experience: "delicious", "very tasty" "great food, great setting". Even teens, in general not too fond of health food, applauded the offerings. "We did not even miss the meat". Of course the restaurant also offers their extensive regular menu for the non-vegan guests containing all you wish From the Land or From the Sea.

Vegan is hot now, says the chef, and we had that confirmed by several guests. Ike's Bistro is an open air restaurant, located in the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa. Under a huge cabana with a view to the romantically lit pool of the resort you are seated in relaxed chairs and served by great waiters. And not unimportant: Covid-19 safe.

Your senses are tickled because of the purity and freshness of the food items. You may choose for the unknown which is a three-course vegan chef tasting menu that can also be combined with a wine pairing. Or you select your choices from the menu. All dishes are 100% Vegan and are gluten-free unless labeled otherwise. Start with appe-



tizers like Vegan Fish Taco, Chickpeas Tartare and Avocado, Spicy Buffalo Cauliflower Wings or Vegetable Tempura. Tomato Basil Soup or Lemongrass Carrot Ginger Soup are simply delicious as are the Arugula Jackfruit Salad or Mesclun Salad. For the main course pick your pick: Sesame Ginger Duck (contains gluten), Stuffed Corn Chips and Avocado, Grilled Fish Filet and Roasted Cauliflower or Truffle Porcini Risotto & Grilled Tofu. This heavenly healthy trip reaches its end destination with a scrumptious dessert: Caribbean Snickers, a must-try! All of those choices embrace your inner senses with their freshness and clear flavors.

Vegan might be on the menu in many restaurants nowadays as 'the other option', but here at Ike's Bistro they celebrate vegan and you get hooked, that is a promise. Passion, creativity, purity, dedication to a concept and a beautiful setting take care of an enchanting experience. Vegans and non-vegans are welcome, Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa has got it all covered.

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## Weekly Promotions



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- Shaba, Noord
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### Farmers Market at Aruba Ostrich Farm

- Yes, Aruba has Ostriches and these can be found at the Aruba Ostrich Farm. Take the whole family there and learn more about the ostriches and even be able to feed them. Upcoming Thursday March 18th, join their popular farmer's market where you will find beautiful handmade jewelry and handicrafts from Aruban Artisans, fresh fruits and vegetables or even grab a bite at the bar or take home a memory from the souvenir art shop.
- 10 AM – 2 PM
- Aruba Ostrich Farm (Matividiri 57)
- Facebook Aruba Ostrich Farm



### Chef's Garden by Papillon

- Sometimes combining the best of the best is a matter of all things falling into place. The stage: an Aruban cunucu house creating a magical ambiance. The play: The Secret Garden; a 6-course culinary voyage by a Michelin-trained chef from Belgium, Griet Vanbrabant. The content: 100% local products from local farmers tuned into the most amazing dishes.
- From 7 PM – 10 PM, every Wednesday
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Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.



For today we received an amazing story from Amy (aka "Aruba Amy") from Minneapolis, Minnesota. She wrote:

"Aruba to me is .....coming "home" to see

all of the wonderful friends who I have met over 25 years of coming to the island. Priceless memories and priceless friends-looking forward to many more! (Enjoyed meeting lobster friends in the photo at Taste My Aruba last week)."



## New support for food aid for Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten

**THE HAGUE- NETHERLANDS — At the suggestion of State Secretary Knops of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, the Dutch cabinet is allocating an additional 15.2 million euros for the food aid program in Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. The inhabitants of the three islands have faced major challenges since the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent loss of tourism. The poverty problem has increased sharply on the islands.**

State Secretary Knops: "The cabinet has always been based on the principle that the Netherlands should not leave the most vulnerable people out in the cold. During my last working visit I experienced how dire the situation is in

some places within our Kingdom. It is very important that the food aid program is continued in the coming period."

Since May 2020, the Dutch cabinet has made money available for food aid in Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. At the moment, a total of about 80,000 people are helped with food aid made possible by the Netherlands.

The Red Cross coordinates the food aid program. But a transition to a more structural form of the program is underway, under the responsibility of the three countries. With these funds, food aid is guaranteed until July 1, 2021. □

Source: [rijksoverheid.nl](http://rijksoverheid.nl)





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# Auto industry urges emissions deal weaker than Obama's

By HOPE YEN and TOM KRISHER

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — A coalition of automakers has told the Biden administration it would agree to raise mileage standards to reduce tailpipe emissions but with tradeoffs and at rates lower than those brokered by California with five other car manufacturers. If agreed to, the proposal could give President Joe Biden a quick win by securing cuts in greenhouse gas emissions rather than waiting months, if not years, to legally undo a giant rollback approved when Donald Trump was president.

But environmental groups say the proposal doesn't go far enough to ward off the damaging effects of climate change and automakers are rejecting tougher Obama-era standards that they have the technology to meet.

It also could result in two different sets of standards, one for California and the states that follow its rules, and another for the rest of the country. This could drive up vehicle prices.

Asked Friday about the proposal, the White House said discussions with the auto industry on a fuel emissions standard were still early. It declined to comment on whether the administration would accept an agreement that falls below the California deal or Obama-era standards, stressing that tough requirements would be needed to get popular and less-efficient SUVs off the road.

Under the plan, automakers would agree to stricter standards in exchange for a "multiplier" that would give them additional credit toward meeting the standards if they sell more electric vehicles, three people with knowledge of the talks said. The deal would incentivize automakers to get more electric vehicles on the road, thereby reducing pollution, said the people, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to reveal internal negotiations.

The proposal would raise



In this Feb. 6, 2020 file photo a Volvo car is parked behind the Volvo logo in the lobby of the company's corporate headquarters, in Brussels.

mileage and reduce greenhouse gas emissions at a rate between Trump's rollback and standards brokered by California in a 2019 agreement with five automakers — Ford, Honda, BMW, Volkswagen and Volvo — that is now followed by 13 states.

Most other automakers, including General Motors, Toyota and Fiat Chrysler (now Stellantis) backed Trump's rollback. They're among the automakers putting forward the new proposal. The companies had no official comment. The Trump rollback increased mileage requirements by 1.5% per year from the 2021 through 2026 model years. The California deal has 3.7% annual increases, while the Obama standards were about 5% annually.

Under the Obama-era standards, automakers got double credit for fully electric vehicles toward meeting their fuel economy and pollution requirements. That "multiplier" was removed in the Trump rollback.

The Trump administration had blocked California's legal authority to set its own standards under the Clean Air Act. The Biden administration is expected to take steps next month to undo that with a rule that environmental groups hope will pressure automakers to

agree to higher standards. A spokesman for the California Air Resources Board, which regulates pollution, wouldn't comment on the automakers' proposal but said the agency "continues to advocate for the most rigorous vehicle standards possible."

Delaware Sen. Tom Carper, chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee who has met with Biden over efficiency and vehicle emission standards, has said the California agreement is a useful starting point that he believes all automakers should join as the two sides negotiate longer-term standards to go beyond model year 2026 to fulfill the goals of the Paris climate agreement.

Following the roadmap of GM's recently announced goal of making all passenger vehicles electric by 2035, the coalition of automakers is pledging efforts to increase production of electric vehicles and hybrids, the people said.

Automakers argue that it's difficult to reach stricter standards because of continuing consumer demand for less-efficient SUVs and trucks, the top-selling vehicles in the country. By promoting more sales of zero-emission electric vehicles, which accounted for less than 2% of U.S. new vehicle

sales last year, the United States can achieve greater emissions reductions down the road.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, whose department is overseeing a rewrite of Trump anti-pollution rules along with the Environmental Protection Agency, has signaled openness to granting industry more credits for EV development.

The automakers' proposal is being presented in hopes of having a preliminary deal by Earth Day, April 22, when the administration is expected to release broader emissions targets at a U.S.-hosted climate summit. It highlights the obstacles ahead for Biden, who during the campaign promised "ambitious" fuel economy standards that also support job creation. Transportation emissions is the single biggest U.S. contributor to climate change. The Alliance for Auto Innovation, a large industry trade group, deferred to a February statement saying it wants to work with the administration on making fuel economy improvements soon, while strengthening the economy and benefiting consumers.

The Trump rollback of the Obama-era standards would require a projected 29 miles per gallon in "real world" stop and start driv-

ing by 2026. That's well below the requirements of the Obama administration rules that would have increased it to 37 mpg.

The California deal with Ford and the other automakers has vehicles getting about 33 mpg on average, according to environmental groups, after accounting for credits for electric vehicles.

Biden has said he would forcefully address climate change by returning to the Obama-era standards.

"When the previous administration reversed the Obama-Biden vehicle standard and picked Big Oil companies over American workers, the Biden-Harris administration will not only bring those standards back, we'll set new, ambitious ones that our workers are ready to meet," Biden said in late January.

Biden also has made boosting electric vehicles a top priority. He has pledged billions of dollars as part of an upcoming infrastructure and climate spending package to build 550,000 charging stations over the next decade to support such vehicles.

In a letter to the White House late last month, two dozen environmental and green-friendly groups including the Sierra Club and Natural Resources Defense Council urged acceptance of nothing less than the Obama standards as part of a longer-term path to make all new cars and light-duty trucks zero-emission by 2035. They described credits granted to automakers for electric vehicles as "loopholes" that do little to reduce emissions in the short term.

"Not only are the automakers rejecting standards they agreed to 10 years ago, they are even refusing a weaker deal that five carmakers cut with California," said Dan Becker, a director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "The administration should follow the science. We need to have much stronger national rules so we're not guilty of looking global warming in the eye and blinking." □

Associated Press



# Survivors struggle as scientists race to solve COVID mystery

By **LINDSEY TANNER**  
AP Medical Writer

There was no reason to celebrate on Rachel Van Lear's anniversary. The same day a global pandemic was declared, she developed symptoms of COVID-19. A year later, she's still waiting for them to disappear. And for experts to come up with some answers.

The Texas woman is one of thousands of self-described long-haulers, patients with symptoms that linger or develop out of the blue months after they first became infected with coronavirus. Hers first arrived March 11, 2020.

The condition affects an uncertain number of survivors in a baffling variety of ways.

"We're faced with a mystery," said Dr. Francis Collins, chief of the National Institutes of Health.

Is it a condition unique to COVID-19, or just a variation of the syndrome that can occur after other infections? How many people are affected, and how long does it last? Is it a new form of chronic fatigue syndrome — a condition with similar symptoms?

Or could some symptoms be unrelated to their COVID-19 but a physical reaction to the upheaval of this past pandemic year — the lockdowns, quarantines, isolation, job losses, racial unrest, political turmoil, not to mention overwhelming illness and deaths?

These are the questions facing scientists as they search for disease markers, treatments and cures. With \$1 billion from Congress, Collins' agency is designing and soliciting studies that aim to follow at least 20,000 people who've had COVID-19.

"We've never really been faced with a post-infectious condition of this magnitude so this is unprecedented," Collins said Monday. "We don't have time to waste."

With nearly 30 million U.S. cases of COVID-19 and 119 million worldwide, the impact could be staggering, even if only a small fraction of patients develop long-



Karla Jefferies stands in her kitchen in Detroit, Friday, March 5, 2021.

Associated Press

term problems.

Fatigue, shortness of breath, insomnia, trouble thinking clearly and depression are among the many reported symptoms. Organ damage, including lung scarring and heart inflammation, have also been seen. Pinpointing whether these symptom are directly linked to the virus or perhaps to some preexisting condition is among scientists' tasks.

"Is it just a very delayed recovery or is it something even more alarming and something that becomes the new normal?" Collins said.

There are a few working theories for what might be causing persistent symptoms. One is that the virus remains in the body at undetectable levels yet still causes tissue or organ damage. Or it overstimulates the immune system, keeping it from returning to a normal state. A third theory: Symptoms linger or arise anew when the virus attacks blood vessels, causing minute, undetectable blood clots that can wreak havoc throughout the body.

Some scientists think each of these may occur in different people.

Dr. Steven Deeks, an infectious disease specialist at the University of California, San Francisco, said researchers first need to create a widely accepted

definition of the syndrome. Estimates are "all over the map because no one is defining it in the same way," he said.

Deeks is leading one study, collecting blood and saliva samples from volunteers who will be followed for up to two years.

Some people develop long-term problems even when their initial infections were silent. Deeks said some evidence suggests that those who initially get sicker from a coronavirus infection might be more prone to persistent symptoms, and women seem to develop them more than men, but those observations need to be confirmed, Deeks said.

Van Lear says she was in great shape when she got sick. At 35, the suburban Austin woman had no other health issues and was a busy mother of three who often worked out. First came a chest cold, then a high fever. A flu test came back negative, so her doctor tested for COVID-19. Soon after she developed blinding headaches, debilitating fatigue and nausea so severe that she needed emergency room treatment.

"I was very scared because no one could tell me what was going to happen to me," Van Lear said.

Over the next several months, symptoms would

come and go: burning lungs, a rapid heartbeat, dizzy spells, hand tremors and hair loss. While most have disappeared, she still deals with an occasional racing heartbeat. Heart monitoring, bloodwork and other tests have all been normal.

Fatigue, fever, and no taste or smell were Karla Jefferies' first symptoms after testing positive last March. Then came brain fog, insomnia, a nagging smell of something burning that only recently disappeared, and intermittent ringing in her ears. Now she can't hear out of her left ear.

Doctors can't find anything to explain it, and she bristles when some doctors dismiss her symptoms.

"I understand that COVID is something that we're all going through together but don't brush me off," said Jefferies, 64, a retired state worker in Detroit.

As an African American woman with diabetes and high blood pressure, she was at high risk for a bad outcome and knows she's lucky her initial illness wasn't more serious. But her persistent symptoms and home confinement got her down and depression set in.

Political and racial unrest that dominated the news didn't help, and church services — often her salvation — were suspended. She knows all that could have

contributed to her ill health and says listening to music — R&B, jazz and a little country — has helped her cope.

Still, Jefferies wants to know what role the virus has played.

"I'm a year in, and to still from time to time have lingering effects, I just don't understand that," Jefferies said.

Jefferies and Van Lear are members of Survivor Corps, one of several online support groups created during the pandemic and that have amassed thousands of members. Some are enrolling in studies to help speed the science.

Dr. Michael Sneller is leading one study at the NIH. So far, 200 have enrolled; they include survivors and a healthy comparison group. They are being given a series of physical and mental tests once or twice a year for three years. Other tests are seeking signs of ongoing inflammation, abnormal antibodies and blood vessel damage.

Sneller said he's found no serious heart or lung tissue damage so far. He notes that many viruses can cause mild heart inflammation, even some cold viruses. Many people recover but in severe cases the condition can lead to heart failure.

Fatigue is the most common symptom in the coronavirus group, and so far researchers have found no medical explanation for it. Insomnia is common, too — in both groups. Sneller says that's not surprising.

"The whole pandemic and lockdown affected all of us," he said. "There's a lot of anxiety in the control group too."

Many have symptoms similar to chronic disease syndrome; and to a condition involving fatigue and thinking difficulties that can develop after treatment for Lyme disease, a bacterial infection spread by certain ticks.

Researchers are hopeful that studies of long-term COVID-19 may yield answers to what causes those conditions, too. □



# Despite hacks, U.S. not seeking widened domestic surveillance

By ERIC TUCKER and FRANK BAJAK

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Biden administration is not planning to step up government surveillance of the U.S. internet even as state-backed foreign hackers and cybercriminals increasingly use it to evade detection, a senior administration official said Friday. The official said the administration, mindful of the privacy and civil liberties implications that could arise, is not currently seeking additional authority to monitor U.S.-based networks. Instead, the administration will focus on fighter partnerships and improved in-

formation-sharing with the private-sector companies that already have broad visibility into the domestic internet, said the official, who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity. The comment was an acknowledgment of the fraught political debate surrounding domestic government surveillance — nearly eight years after former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden triggered a scandal with leaked agency documents — and a recognition of the challenges in balancing the growing cyber defense imperative against privacy concerns

that come with stepped-up monitoring. Foreign state hackers are increasingly using U.S.-based virtual private networks, or VPNs, to evade detection by U.S. intelligence agencies, who are legally constrained from monitoring domestic infrastructure. The U.S. is also addressing a separate, far more widespread and indiscriminate hack that cyber sleuths blame on China and which became a global crisis last week. □

**Conceptis Sudoku** By Dave Green

			9	1	8			
	6			3			7	
	1	8				3	5	
5			4		1			3
6	2			8			1	4
8			3		6			7
	9	2				6	4	
	8			6			3	
			1	9	3			

Difficulty Level ★ 3/15

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# Almodóvar returns to the female universe with Penélope Cruz

By **SIGAL RATNER-ARIAS**

**Associated Press**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Pedro Almodóvar exposed all his vulnerability in the semi-autobiographical film "Pain and Glory." Now he returns his focus to women not only with the short film "The Human Voice", an Oscar hopeful that arrives this week in the United States, but with an upcoming movie that reunites him with his muse Penélope Cruz.

"Madres paralelas" ("Parallel Mothers") will begin production on March 21 in Madrid "if the virus does not interfere," said the Spanish director, who took advantage of the confinement and wrote the script after his plans to shoot for the first time in the U.S. were thwarted by the pandemic last year.

"I return to the female universe and to motherhood as well, which is a subject that has always fascinated me. But in this case, the mothers that appear are very different from the ones Penélope has played before," Almodóvar said in Spanish during a recent interview with The Associated Press via Zoom from Madrid.

"These are very imperfect mothers and as an author that's what interested me the most, especially because I have already done several self-sacrificing and heroic mothers," he said. "So this is a little bit about descendants, children, but also about ancestors, about family."

That's not all he has in mind. Having shot his first English production with Tilda Swinton — an adaptation of Jean Cocteau's play "The Human Voice" — he plans another English-language short in a genre he hasn't explored yet: the Western. The thing is that making short films "has been very refreshing for me, like recovering new airs," said Almodóvar.

"I have recovered a bit of that playful feeling that filming was for me in the first years, because I have allowed myself more freedom than I have been able to afford lately."



Actress Penelope Cruz, left, and director Pedro Almodovar pose for photographers at the photocall for the film "Pain and Glory" at the 72nd international film festival, Cannes, southern France, on May 18, 2019.

**Associated Press**

"The Human Voice" opens Friday in northern California, Miami and Chicago before expanding to other markets.

Almodóvar, 71, who had COVID-19 just before the quarantine began in Spain a year ago, spoke with the AP about the confinement of his protagonist in "The Human Voice," the technical freedoms that he took in this film, as well as the role of streaming during the pandemic and his desire to work with "The Queen's Gambit's" star Anya Taylor-Joy.

Answers have been edited for brevity and clarity.

**AP: You've been flirting with the idea of adapting "The Human Voice" for many years. Did the fact that the story unfolds in confinement had anything to do with the decision to make it now?**

**ALMODÓVAR:** The truth is that I had it in mind before the confinement started, but the film is, besides the story of a woman desperate because of her lover's abandonment — that is confinement, the fact of not seeing the light at the end of the tunnel when someone is as madly in love as Tilda Swinton in the movie. It becomes a meta-

phor for this time, because she is confined first in the set that we have created as her house, but then that set is part of another closed space where she moves like a ghost, which is the studio where we filmed.

**AP: The camera leaves the walls of the apartment more than once to show the set and the equipment to represent the outdoors. It seems a nod to the theater and an emphasis to the confinement in which we find ourselves.**

**ALMODÓVAR:** As an experiment, I really wanted to get out of the set and show the matter of the cinematographic artifice — the wood, the construction, the empty walls. But it was also not only a visual whim but for example, the fact that a woman is on a terrace looking at the skyline and we verify that there is no skyline but what there is a wall gives the impression that her loneliness is greater, that she lives in the dark almost like a ghost. The fact of also having the (telephone) conversation in motion with the earphones and not seeing who she is addressing gives the character a much greater feeling of loneliness. I tried to unite something purely the-

atrical, which is the monologue, with something essentially cinematographic, which is the place where it is shot. It is not filmed theater, but it is theater within cinema.

**AP: Swinton delivers a magnetic performance. What was it like working with her?**

**ALMODÓVAR:** I was a little scared to work in English, but on the other hand it was also one of the reasons for making this short, the fact that it's 30 minutes was kind of an exercise to see if I was able to direct in English. But the truth is that Tilda's intervention has been key because from the first rehearsals there was an incredible chemistry between the two. We understood each other from the first moment and I didn't feel that I was speaking in a different language. Ultimately, the language we both spoke was the language of the cinema.

**AP: Your last short film was 2009's "The Cannibalistic Councillor." How did it feel going back to this format?**

**ALMODÓVAR:** You know, when I finished "Pain and Glory" ... what I wanted to do and what I dreamed of was making this short film. It's not that I had lost my freedom while making

"Pain and Glory," not at all. But the one hour and a half or two hours footage force you to do some things that you shouldn't have to take into account. I mean, being 30 minutes, I allowed myself more freedom than in a feature film for a mere narrative fact.

**AP: Like getting off the set...**

**ALMODÓVAR:** Of course. I wouldn't have been able to get off the set in a feature film, because it wouldn't make the sense it makes here.

**AP: You've always been an advocate for the big screen experience. Has the pandemic changed your perception of streaming?**

**ALMODÓVAR:** No, but the truth is that streaming has filled the void left in me of not being able to go to the movies. In Madrid there are cinemas open, but the programming is very modest because the great films are hijacked by the studios. Even so, I still go at least once a week. I'm not such a fan of TV series, but the last one I've seen that I liked a lot is "The Queen's Gambit" and I absolutely adore the actress, who I've read in an interview wants to work with me and I'm going to tell her yes. I will contact her to tell her absolutely because she has an appearance that's very interesting to me; she can be a thousand different characters and she's a very good actress. I also follow faithfully "The Crown," which is a real spectacle. My struggle is that the model of the movie theaters does not disappear but coexist with the fiction on (streaming) platforms. It is very important to be in a room where the screen is much larger than the house where you live in. Big movies, good movies, deserve to absorb you completely. □

7	3	5	9	1	8	4	2	6
9	6	4	5	3	2	1	7	8
2	1	8	6	4	7	3	5	9
5	7	9	4	2	1	8	6	3
6	2	3	7	8	9	5	1	4
8	4	1	3	5	6	2	9	7
3	9	2	8	7	5	6	4	1
1	8	7	2	6	4	9	3	5
4	5	6	1	9	3	7	8	2

Difficulty Level ★

3/15



## Record-setting Saints QB Brees announces retirement at 42

By **BRETT MARTEL**

**NEW ORLEANS (AP)** — Saints quarterback Drew Brees, the NFL's leader in career completions and yards passing, has decided to retire after 20 NFL seasons, including his last 15 with New Orleans.

"Til the very end I exhausted myself to give everything to the Saints organization, my team and the great City of New Orleans," Brees said in social media post on Sunday. "We shared some amazing moments together, many of which are emblazoned in our hearts and minds and will forever be a part of us."

"I am only retiring from football. I am not retiring from New Orleans," he added. "This is not goodbye."

The post also included a short video in which his four young children exclaimed, "Our dad is finally going to retire so he can spend more time with us!"

The decision comes after the 42-year-old quarterback won nine of 12 regular-season starts while completing 70.5% of his passes in 2020, and then won a wild-card round playoff game before New Orleans' season ended with a divisional-round loss to eventual Super Bowl champion Tampa Bay.

Brees missed four games this season with multiple fractured ribs and a collapsed lung. It marked the second straight season Brees had to miss part of a season with an injury after missing just one game because of injury in the previous 13. In 2019, Brees missed five games because of a thumb injury on his throwing hand that required surgery.

Saints coach Sean Payton said Brees had plenty of other injuries or ailments during his Saints tenure, but willed himself to play through them whenever possible.

"Over the years his durability and availability is quite amazing. I can recall so many of these different injuries," Payton said. "He's as courageous and as tough

a player as I've ever been around."

Brees is the NFL's all-time leader in yards passing with 80,358, although that mark will be under threat next season by 44-year-old Tom Brady, who has 79,204 career yards passing. Brees' 571 career touchdown passes rank second behind

Brady's 581.

While Brees had dropped hints about his intentions, saying he considered himself to be on "borrowed time," he declined to confirm his plans until now.

His retirement brings an end to a career that came to embody resilience and renewal on multiple levels. □



This Feb. 7, 2010, file photo shows New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees (9) celebrating with the Vince Lombardi Trophy after the Saints' 31-17 win over the Indianapolis Colts in the NFL Super Bowl XLIV football game in Miami.

Associated Press



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## Thomas lives on edge and rallies to win Players Championship

By **DOUG FERGUSON**

AP Golf Writer

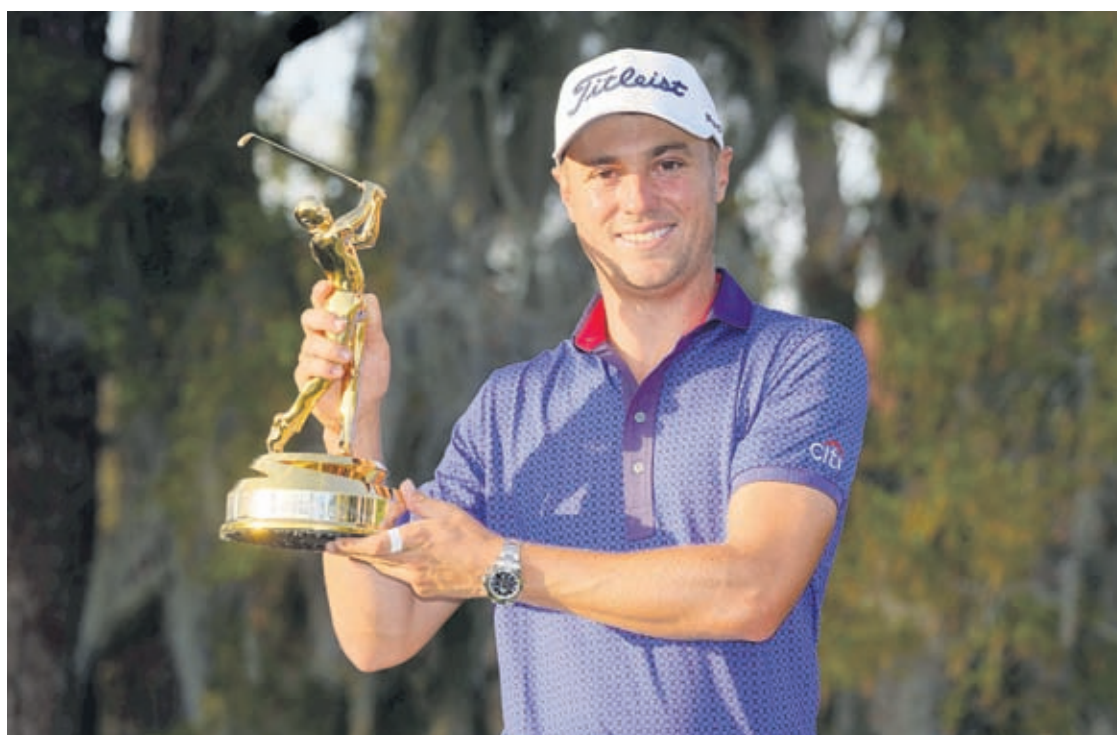
**PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. (AP)** — Justin Thomas

found the right time for a near-perfect performance to put a rough start to the year behind him, rallying from three shots behind with bold play to close with a 4-under 68 and win The Players Championship on Sunday.

Thomas becomes only the fourth player to win a major, The Players Championship, the FedEx Cup and a World Golf Championship, and it couldn't have come at a better time.

He called it as good as he has ever played tee-to-green, and he needed it to outlast Lee Westwood, a hard-luck runner-up for the second straight week. Westwood birdied the final hole for a 72 to finish one shot behind.

Thomas began the year with a barely audible anti-gay slur under his breath after missing a short putt. That led to one corporate



Justin Thomas holds the trophy after winning The Players Championship golf tournament Sunday, March 14, 2021, in Ponte Vedra Beach,

Associated Press

sponsor dropping him and another giving him a public reprimand. The one time he had a chance to win, he learned his grandfather died before the final round of the Phoenix Open. He was shaken until Sunday

at the TPC Sawgrass, where he took on every shot and delivered a gem.

Thomas went birdie-birdie-eagle-birdie around the turn, and put away Westwood for good with a pair of lag putts from 50 feet —

one for birdie on the par-5 16th to take the lead, another on the island-green 17th for a par.

Thomas still had one more shot before he was in the clear. He took on the water framing the left side of the

18th fairway, the ball moving right-to-left and bouncing straight off the crown of the first cut, safely in the fairway.

His approach landed on the fringe — the first green he missed all day — leaving a simple two-putt for par and the 14th victory of his PGA Tour career. He returns to No. 2 in the world.

"I fought so hard today," Thomas said. "It's probably one of the best rounds of my life tee-to-green. I've seen some crazy stuff happen on TV in the past, and I'm glad to be on this side of it."

All the crazy stuff came early.

Bryson DeChambeau, coming off a win last week at Bay Hill, topped an iron off the tee on the par-4 fourth hole that went only about 140 yards until it plunked into the water. From 237 yards on a forward tee to a green protected by water, he hit a slice with a 5-iron some 40 yards right of the green. □

## Van der Poel solo win as Pogačar keeps Tirreno lead



Dutch Mathieu Van Der Poel cross the finish line to win the fifth stage of the Tirreno Adriatico cycling race, from Castellato to Castelfidardo, Italy, Sunday, March 14, 2021.

Associated Press

**CASTELFIDARDO, Italy (AP)** — Mathieu van der Poel so-

loed to victory on the fifth stage of the weeklong Tir-

reno-Adriatico race as Tour de France champion Tadej Pogačar extended his overall lead to more than a minute on Sunday.

Van der Poel attacked with more than 50 kilometers (31 miles) remaining of the 205-kilometer (127-mile) leg from Castellalto to Castelfidardo and the Dutch champion built up a lead of around three minutes on the tough finishing circuit, which had to be covered four times.

The chasing group was happy to let him go as he posed little threat to the overall standings but Pogačar made his move with 17 kilometers remain-

ing and slashed the gap to finish just 10 seconds behind Van der Poel.

Wout van Aert was third, 49 seconds behind Van der Poel.

"I was riding completely on empty in the last few kilometers," Van der Poel said. "I was told that Pogačar was coming close but I wasn't even able to listen. I just wanted to reach the finish as fast as I could."

It was a second victory in this year's race for Van der Poel after the Alpecin-Fenix rider also won stage three on Friday.

Pogačar moved 1 minute, 15 seconds ahead of Van Aert in the overall stand-

ings. Mikel Landa is third, three minutes behind the Slovenian.

"When I saw Wout van Aert suffering I went to try and get more time on GC but I never thought I would be anywhere close to catching Van der Poel," Pogačar said.

Monday's sixth and penultimate stage is a 169-kilometer (105-mile) leg from Castelraimondo to Lido di Fermo.

The race ends on Tuesday with an individual time trial in San Benedetto del Tronto. "I'm super happy with the advantage I have over Van Aert now before the time trial," Pogačar said. □